

Nanzan University

Cinderella: A Casebook by Alan Dundes; Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook by Alan Dundes

Review by: Chieko Mulhern

Asian Folklore Studies, Vol. 50, No. 1 (1991), pp. 236-238

Published by: [Nanzan University](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1178196>

Accessed: 18/06/2014 06:04

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Nanzan University is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Asian Folklore Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

material that places the ballad in a wider context than before. He then proceeds to offer a new explanation of the content of the ballad, now based on the viewpoint of the victim.

Folklore Matters is not a large book, but that makes all the more admirable the way the author succeeds in doing justice to so many of the most important subjects in folkloristics. This book is a key work, and should be made compulsory reading in every university in which folkloristics is studied.

REFERENCE CITED:

ÁGÚSTSSON, S. J.

1942 *Thjóðsögur og gervithjóðsögur*. Reykjavík: Helgafell.

Jón Hnefill AÐALSTEINSSON

University of Iceland

Reykjavík

DUNDES, ALAN, editor. *Cinderella: A Casebook*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989. xii+316 pages. Maps, diagrams, selected bibliography. Paper US\$14.95; ISBN 0-299-11864-9.

DUNDES, ALAN, editor. *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989. xi+251 pages. Illustration, tables, suggestions for further reading, index. Cloth US\$35.00; ISBN 0-299-12030-9. Paper US\$12.95; ISBN 0-299-12034-1.

Of all the world-famous fairy tales, Cinderella and Little Red Riding Hood must rank near the top of the list in terms of the wealth of scholarship generated in the past hundred years. Professor Dundes's veritable "anthology" of Cinderella studies has been an invaluable research tool and a source of great inspiration. Welcome indeed is the news that it is now reissued and made available along with its new and equally impressive companion on Little Red Riding Hood from the same publisher.

These two volumes stand as milestones, near-complete sources of primary and secondary materials on their respective subjects, and epitomes not only of folklore studies but also of literary criticism replete with everything possibly needed by anyone surveying the past scholarly achievements or planning further research in the field. They provide various versions of the tales in English translation, some rare and not readily accessible, such as Basile's "The Cat Cinderella," and some totally new, such as the Indic variants.

The selected analytical writings include definitive classics and new discoveries, covering the whole range of methodological modes and theoretical perspectives from early forms and typology to myth-ritual, social-historical, anthropological, and psychoanalytical readings. The annotated bibliographies are most helpful, illuminating, and comprehensive, encompassing publications in other Western languages and works by Asianists.

In fact, Asianists stand to gain most from this pair, for one of the messages coming through unmistakably clear is Professor Dundes's call for eclectic scholarship and a comparative study of Asian cognates as well as older oral tales to avoid the pitfalls of ethnocentrism resulting from the misdirected concentration on the literary versions of Perrault and the Grimm Brothers for analysis.

A greater time depth of Oriental variants is illustrated by concrete examples.

James Danandjaja's presentation of a Javanese Cinderella places the folktale in cultural context, and the importance of ethnic values and world views is further stressed by Margaret Mills's study of a Muslim women's ritual version that shows "how folktales encode the cultural norms concerned with sex roles." Particularly valuable to Japanologists is Ramanujan's introduction and analysis of a Hindu tale of *Hanchi*, which has amazing affinities to the medieval Japanese stepdaughter tales of Hachikazuki (Bowl-wearer), and the fifth-century play *Sākuntalā* by Kalidāsa about a girl clad in a bark gown, which is very much like Japan's *ubakawa* (lit. old-woman skin) type of folk Cinderella tales.

The assortment of essays on the meaning of Cinderella in this collection represents an impressive diversity of approaches, including famous articles such as Marie-Louise von Franz's brilliant Jungian analysis, Ben Rubenstein's Freudian tracing of the development of a female child, and even an Irish philosopher's reading of Cinderella as a Christian religious allegory. Above all, Professor Dundes is profoundly enlightening in his psychoanalytical probe of the folklore source of *King Lear*, which reveals the projection pattern that makes the play "a girl's fairy tale told from the father's point of view." It can inspire cross-cultural and cross-genre analyses of Kurosawa Akira's film *Ran* in search of symbolic-psychological as well as cultural answers to such questions as why Kurosawa features three sons as victims and a daughter-in-law in a negative role, while modeling the aged patriarch closely on King Lear.

The casebook on Little Red Riding Hood also intends "to sample the rich and diverse scholarship devoted to elucidating the possible meaning and significance of the tale." It is a sobering and humbling experience to learn from the unwitting but inevitable errors in interpretation that critics and scholars are creatures of their own respective times and schools of thought, limited by their own insights as well as intellectual predilections.

Yet, even subjective, doctrinaire, or archaic readings based on now obsolete theories can still be of service in cross-disciplinary comparative studies. Hans-Wolf Jäger's unusual analysis of the political significance of literary context in Ludwig Tieck's 1800 play on Little Red Riding Hood and the 1812 Grimm version points out reflections of the anti-French sentiment that existed in the German territory under the French occupation. Jäger's assertion that Monsieur Wolf stands for a libertarian attitude threatening to undermine the authoritarian, regimented way of the German tradition may suggest a viable approach in the study of children's literature by Japan's prewar proletarian writers and the medieval (fairy) tales obviously written by the Jesuits for proselytizing purposes.

The most substantial piece in this volume is a 45-page article at the end in which Professor Dundes reviews various past attempts to find possible underlying meanings of the tale so as to "make it easier for future interpreters of 'Little Red Riding Hood' to see what earlier critics had to say and perhaps how and why they went astray" (193). He often proves the fallacy of an established theory on the force of new insights gained from the study of Asian cognates that had previously been unknown or ignored in Western scholarship. His detection of projection inversion that has turned what is essentially an infantile fantasy of oral greed into a story about a parent who wants to eat her child is most convincing in the light of the Chinese variants of "The Tiger and the Children" introduced by Paul Delarue and the cultural interpretation of "Grandaunt Tiger" based on 241 texts collected by Sinologist Wolfram Eberhard. Japanologists are yet to contribute the old-folk motif of Yamauba the Mountain Crone, who tries to devour her own children.

Inasmuch as Professor Dundes agrees that Little Red Riding Hood depicts an in-

tergenerational conflict between daughter and mother, and he “ would use the Proppian model to suggest that same-sex rivalry is a standard feature of all oral fairy tales ” (223), folklore studies have much to offer to women’s studies. An excerpt from a definitive book by Jack Zipes, the foremost expert on Little Red Riding Hood, provides an interesting piece of historical information regarding the motif of a stylish cap: “ clothing was codified and strictly enforced under Louis XIV ” (122) so that the cloth cap signified the middle-class women as the velvet one did the aristocratic ladies—a similar semiotic framework in clothing convention happened to serve as one of the cultural keys for this reviewer in her series of articles tracing the Italian motifs and the Jesuit authorship of the Japanese Cinderella tales roughly contemporary to Louis XIV’s reign.

Zipes’s new, feminist-inspired insights that Little Red Riding Hood is a male creation and projection of “ men’s fear of women’s sexuality and of their own as well ” and that “ the wolf is not really a male but symbolizes natural urges and social nonconformity ” (126) ring true beyond the cultural borders. They can be applied, for example, to literary analysis of a Japanese novelist, Shōji Kaoru (b. 1937), who gave the unlikely title, *Little Red Riding Hood, Watch Out*, to his award-winning 1969 fiction delineating a high-school boy’s rite of passage in the vein of *Catcher in the Rye* and followed it up two years later with a highly popular essay entitled, “ The Wolf is not Scary.”

These two casebooks on the fairy tales that boast global distribution and continuing proliferation can guide and inspire scholars of any discipline, who can benefit from Professor Dundes’s caveat that “ identification without interpretation, as practiced by too many folklorists, is sterile ” (194–95). Asianists and comparatists in particular are in the position to make great contributions much needed in furthering the cause of eclectic scholarship. This tandem source material and research tool can be assigned in various college courses to teach critical reading methods and analytical techniques. Besides all the practical uses and professional inspiration, these volumes provide a sheer pleasure of intellectual stimulation and an absorbing mental trip through the endless maze of logical constructs.

Chieko MULHERN

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

LISZKA, JAMES JAKÓB. *The Semiotic of Myth: A Critical Study of the Symbol*. Advances in Semiotics. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990. 243 pages. Index, bibliography. Cloth US\$29.95.

It has been some years since a book on myth and symbol has made me stop and think about the subject as much as James Liszka’s *The Semiotic of Myth* has. Not only does it navigate a clear course through the major symbolic theories in currency today, but it also makes an important contribution of its own to our understanding the deep mystery of what it means to be a mythmaking animal.

His reading of Pierce’s semiotic theory in the opening chapters is uncommonly perceptive. Gradually one comes to see why: Liszka’s aim is not so much to take issue with Pierce as to take sides with his major insights and carry them ahead. One cannot help thinking that Pierce, who despised the “ war of all against all ” that he found in the philosophical arena and pleaded again and again for cooperation in the pursuit of truth, would have read these pages with deep satisfaction. And that he would probably have agreed with the criticisms.